UNITED
NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/AC.109/2012
10 April 1995

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE SITUATION
WITH REGARD TO THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING
OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL
COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES

PITCAIRN

Working paper prepared by the Secretariat

CONTENTS

		Paragraphs	Page
I.	GENERAL	1 - 2	2
II.	CONSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENTS	3	2
III.	ECONOMIC CONDITIONS	4 - 18	2
IV.	SOCIAL CONDITIONS	19 - 24	4
V.	EDUCATIONAL CONDITIONS	25 - 26	5
VI.	FUTURE STATUS OF THE TERRITORY	27 - 28	5

95-09610 (E) 180495 200495

PITCAIRN 1/

I. GENERAL

1. Pitcairn is a Non-Self-Governing Territory in the South Pacific administered by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. It comprises four islands situated about midway between Australia and South America at 25° south and 130° west. Only one of the islands, also known as Pitcairn, is inhabited. It is approximately 3 kilometres long and 1.5 kilometres wide and has a land area of 4.5 square kilometres (452 hectares). Adamstown is the only settlement. The three uninhabited islands are Ducie, Henderson and Oeno. According to the most recent information, on 31 December 1993 the population was 65.

2. The Pitcairners have their own dialect, a mixture of eighteenth century English and Polynesian, with the former predominating since most of the island's contacts are with English-speaking countries.

II. CONSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

3. A summary of constitutional developments in the Territory is contained in the previous working paper issued by the Secretariat on 4 March 1994 (A/AC.109/1179, paras. 4-8).

III. ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

4. The economy of Pitcairn is based on subsistence fishing and gardening and the sale of handicrafts and postage stamps. Since the population has been relatively stable, land use has varied little in recent years. Apart from the Adamstown settlement, which occupies approximately 24 hectares, land is classified as suitable for gardens or arable farming (117 hectares), forest (77 hectares) and non-arable cliffs and rock ledges (121 hectares). Land is family-owned and is usually passed on to successive generations, but the law allows for leasehold arrangements and "borrow" land. The Lands and Administration of Estates Ordinance provides, inter alia, for ownership and registration of land.

5. During 1992/93, Pitcairn incurred a budgetary deficit of $NZ 260,867. During this period, revenue amounted to $NZ 553,128 while expenditure totalled $NZ 813,995 (compared to $NZ 817,987 in 1991/92).

6. Pitcairn's main sources of income were the sale of postage stamps, as well as interest on the proceeds which are invested. Stamp sales declined from $NZ 424,060 1991/92 to $NZ 341,100 in 1992/93; interest and dividends fell to $NZ 290,445 from $NZ 466,906 for the previous period.

7. The Island Council plays the major role in identifying areas requiring expenditure of public funds and in determining priorities. The main expenditures during 1992/93 were as follows (corresponding figures for 1991/92

are given in parentheses): administration and miscellaneous, $NZ 397,157 ($NZ 371,800); postal and philatelic operations, $NZ 185,793 ($NZ 188,200); medical services, $NZ 54,750 ($NZ 90,700); education, $NZ 97,414 ($NZ 74,500); international communications, $NZ 33,713 ($NZ 36,800); and agriculture, $NZ 7,855 ($NZ 7,100).

8. Most imports are for home use, consisting mainly of cereals, eggs, fats, meats, milk, sugar, machinery, lubricating oil and building materials. Exports consist of handicrafts, fruits and vegetables, which are sold mainly to passing vessels. There are no customs tariffs in the Territory.

9. Responsibility for agriculture is vested in the head forester, who has two part-time assistants. Livestock consists of some 100 goats and poultry. A tractor with a driver is available for hire at $NZ 4 per hour to assist in garden cultivation. Seeds, fertilizers and pesticides are available at cost from the forestry department. Bees provide small quantities of honey for domestic consumption; their pollination of tree and garden crops has increased production.

10. Subsistence fishing is one of the main occupations of the islanders. Under the Fisheries Zone Ordinance of 1980, Pitcairn declared a 200-mile fisheries zone around the island in the hope of increasing its income by selling fishing licences. However, owing to Pitcairn's remoteness, very few agreements have been concluded so far. In 1992 a 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zone was also declared to protect the island's resources. During the period from 1 January 1989 to 31 December 1993 only two fishing licences were issued to foreign fishing vessels.

11. The most common species of fish caught around Pitcairn are rock cod, grey mullet, red snapper and mackerel. Lobsters and other shellfish are also caught and sold to passing ships.

12. Electricity is supplied by government-owned diesel generators. Two 50-kilovolt ampere (KVA) generators supply power for public lighting (including navigational lights) as well as for private homes in Adamstown. In addition, the Government operates two smaller generators (9.25 KVA and 8 KVA) to meet school and telecommunications requirements.

13. Pitcairn is surrounded by open ocean and has no sheltered bay for anchorage. Frequent difficulties encountered in unloading cargo and passengers led the administering Power to construct a jetty at Bounty Bay in 1977.

14. Vessels of one shipping company make approximately four scheduled calls per year on their run between New Zealand and Panama. Other cargo vessels make unscheduled calls. During 1993, a total of 45 cargo vessels, 4 naval vessels and 12 other vessels, 4 cruise ships and 25 yachts stopped at the island for varying periods.

15. In the past, several projects, including the construction of an airstrip for light aircraft, have been examined by the administering Power in order to improve Pitcairn's communications with the outside world. However, after

weighing the high costs of construction and maintenance of a runway against its limited use, it was decided that an airstrip could not be justified.

16. There are approximately 6.4 kilometres of dirt roads on Pitcairn, which are maintained by the community. In 1992 there were about 30 vehicles on the island, mostly motorcycles.

17. Postal facilities are available. In April 1992, the radio-telephone and telegraph service linking the Territory with the outside world was replaced by a satellite system which provides modern telephone, facsimile and telex services, thus giving Pitcairners greater access to the outside world. There are local telephone connections between private houses, the school and some public buildings.

18. The administering Power is preparing a management plan to address conservation issues on Henderson Island. The plan takes into account the isolation and remoteness of the Pitcairn Islands. The plan will be agreed to by the local authorities. 2/

IV. SOCIAL CONDITIONS

19. According to previous reports of the administering Power, there are no social problems of a racial or cultural nature on Pitcairn. Women and men have equal status; there are personal and corporate freedoms and Pitcairn's legislation meets the requirements of United Nations conventions on human rights.

20. The population of the Territory is self-employed. Allowances and wages are paid to members of the community who participate in local government activities and who perform communal services. Payment for casual work, usually for the local administration, is $NZ 3.35 per hour.

21. The quality of housing varies. Homes built or renovated since 1984, when a subsidized building scheme was introduced, have concrete or particle board floors and indoor bathrooms and kitchens.

22. A consumer's cooperative society, established in 1967, owns the only shop in the Territory and provides basic foodstuffs and staples and a limited supply of clothing, footwear, hardware, kitchenware, stationery and toiletries. During 1992/93, the cooperative society's turnover amounted to $NZ 101,180.

23. There is a well-equipped government clinic run by a registered nurse in cooperation with a church organization. Planning for a new medical centre has recently started. Dental officers visit the Territory occasionally. During 1993 professional services were rendered by five doctors travelling on ships which stopped briefly at the island. One minor operation was carried out aboard a cruise ship, and eight patients were sent to New Zealand for treatment.

24. The Government meets the cost of medical supplies and drugs. If medical treatment is required outside Pitcairn, compassionate grants or loans are available from public funds. There are no prevalent diseases, although a small

number of people are receiving treatment for diabetes. Most of the population has been immunized against poliomyelitis. A widow's benefit scheme was introduced in 1983/84. Pensions are paid to persons who are 65 years of age and over and a child benefit is paid to the parents or guardians of all children under 15 years of age.

V. EDUCATIONAL CONDITIONS

25. There is one school operated and financed by the Government. Education is free and attendance is compulsory for all children between 5 and 15 years of age. In 1993 there were eight girls and five boys attending classes. Instruction is in the English language and is based on the New Zealand standard curriculum. Post-primary education is conducted at the school by correspondence courses arranged through the New Zealand Department of Education. During 1993, three post-primary students attended school in New Zealand, two at the Government's expense.

26. A trained teacher (Education Officer) is recruited in New Zealand, normally for a two-year term. Internal examinations are conducted by the Education Officer and the Governor may prescribe external examinations and arrange for inspections.

VI. FUTURE STATUS OF THE TERRITORY

Consideration by the General Assembly

27. In a statement to the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) of the General Assembly on 12 October 1994, 3/ the representative of the United Kingdom stated that his Government continued to take seriously its obligations under the Charter of the United Nations to develop self-government in its dependent Territories and, in cooperation with the locally elected Governments, to ensure that their constitutional frameworks continued to meet the wishes of their peoples. The United Kingdom also took seriously its obligations towards the economic needs of its dependent Territories.

28. On 9 December 1994, the General Assembly adopted by consensus decision 49/421 on the question of Pitcairn.

Notes

1/ The information contained in this paper has been derived from a published official report of parliamentary debates of the House of Commons and from information transmitted to the Secretary-General by the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland under Article 73 e of the Charter of the United Nations on 16 September 1994 for the period 1992/93.

2/ United Kingdom, House of Commons, Official Report, Parliamentary Debates (Hansard), vol. 243, No. 106, 18 May 1994, pp. 462 and 463.

3/ A/C.4/49/SR.5, para. 28.